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Title: Agri-tourism funds awarded locally

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Lead:

The Kentucky Agriculture Development Board approved eight projects in the first round of the 2005 Agri-tourism Competitive Awards Program.

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The Kentucky Agriculture Development Board approved eight projects in the first round of the 2005 Agri-tourism Competitive Awards Program.

The funding totals \$292,200 and is spread across the commonwealth.

In Mason County, "R" Farm Pumpkins and More, LLC was approved for \$15,000 which is to be used for expansion and to promote the agri-tourism operation. The farm holds a pumpkin festival each October.

The 2005 Agri-tourism Competitive Awards Program was designed to assist producers as they venture into Kentucky's emerging agri-tourism industry. The board set aside \$1 million, \$500,00 for each of two rounds, in state funds for the development of agri-tourism businesses and regional organizations in the competitive awards program. The deadline for the next round of applications is Aug. 1.

The program is one that the Kentucky Legislature hopes will continue to make great strides towards lessening Kentucky's dependence on tobacco production. By investing 50 percent of Kentucky's Master Settlement Agreement funds into the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board, the state is working to revitalize the farm economy. Since the inception of the program in January 2001, the Agriculture Development Board has approved more than 1,950 proposals committing more than \$17 million to an array of county, regional and state projects designed to increase net farm income and create sustainable new farm-based business enterprises.

Loura and Davis Robinson, the owners of "R" Farm, have operated a pumpkin farm and festival at the farm on Strodes Run Road for several years.

After the decline of the tobacco industry, the Robinsons began growing pumpkins as a way to supplement lost income. The farm now holds an annual pumpkin festival with many other activities available during the fall weekends.

Other projects receiving funding are: Acres of Land, vegetable processing and retail deli operation in Madison County; Boyd Orchards in Woodford County; Chaney's Dairy Barn, Inc.; Evan Orchard and Cider Mill, LLC; and Farmer Bill's, LLC.

More information about the 2005 Agri-tourism Competitive Awards Program and other grant programs can be obtained by calling the Governor's Office of Agriculture Policy at 502-564-4627.

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